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After Nehru, What? Britain, the United States, and the Other Transfer of Power in India, 1960–64

Paul M. McGarr*

In November 1959, India's Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, turned seventy. Having led his country since Britain's departure from South Asia in August 1947, Nehru's seventieth birthday stimulated debates, both inside and outside the Indian subcontinent, on India's future in a post-Nehruvian world. In the early 1960s, with the Indian premier's health deteriorating and Sino-Indian relations under strain, British and US policymakers evidenced increasing concern with whom, or perhaps more pertinently, with what, forces would govern the world's largest democracy after Nehru. This article, which draws upon recently released British and US archival records, provides the first assessment of Western involvement in the struggle to succeed Nehru which occurred within India's ruling Congress Party between 1960 and 1964. Moreover, it offers insights into Anglo-American concern that Nehru's health adversely affected Indian policymaking; the involvement of foreign intelligence services in India's domestic politics; and the misplaced expectations of British and US officials that the appointment of Lal Bahadur Shastri as India's second Prime Minister, in May 1964, would herald the beginning of a new and more productive relationship between India and the West.

Keywords: India; Nehru; Shastri; Anglo-American

On 26 May 1964, India's Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, worked late into the night in his New Delhi residence, Teen Murti Bhavan, clearing pending papers and dealing with outstanding correspondence. The following morning, a member of Nehru's staff discovered the Indian premier lying unconscious on his bedroom floor in a pool of blood. Frantic medical efforts to stem the bleeding from a ruptured aorta in Nehru's stomach failed, and later that day the first, and at that time only leader that independent India had known, was pronounced dead.¹ As news of Nehru's death spread across India, the country came to a standstill. Government offices closed, shops pulled down their shutters, and twelve days of state mourning began. In New York, debate in the United Nations Security Council was suspended as a mark of respect. Back in New Delhi, 50,000 Indians flocked to the Prime Minister's home to file slowly past his funeral bier. Asked to comment on Nehru's passing, a spokesman for the Indian High Commission in London stated simply: 'For us it is like the shattering of the Himalayas.'²

Jawaharlal Nehru accumulated a formidable amount of political power after the British left India in August 1947. In addition to his prime-ministerial responsibilities, Nehru managed India's external-affairs portfolio, led its economic-planning

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commission, ran the country's atomic-energy programme and chaired the ruling Congress Party's Working Committee. Moreover, after the death in December 1950 of India's Home Minister, and Deputy Prime Minister, Vallabhbhai Patel, Nehru was without a substantive political rival. In 1958, the Indian leader's omnipotence prompted Britain's High Commissioner to India, Malcolm MacDonald, to observe that, '... Mr. Nehru has hitherto exerted unchallenged and almost unqualified personal authority [in India]. In fact, Indian democracy already possesses some of the features of a typical Asian autocracy.'³

Nehru's death in May 1964 came after his health had been in decline for some time, and was not unexpected. Nonetheless, it was greeted with considerable unease, both in India and abroad. 'A sense of crisis has been growing in India,' *The Times* had noted the previous January. 'It is not so much a nervous or hysterical sense as the recognition that one era is passing and another, whose outlines are still undefined, will soon be following.'⁴ In fact, as early as November 1959, the arrival of Nehru's seventieth birthday had amplified debates over whether India's Prime Minister should step down from office, and who should succeed him when he did.⁵ Furthermore, by the turn of the decade, as Nehru's health faltered and his grip on power weakened, British and US policymakers became increasingly concerned not only with whom, but perhaps more pertinently, with what forces, would shape the future of the world's largest democracy.⁶

Jawaharlal Nehru's life and work has received considerable attention.⁷ Existing scholarship, however, has approached important questions surrounding the end of Nehru's life from a predominately Indian perspective. Much focus, for example, has been placed upon the jockeying for power which occurred within the ranks of the ruling Congress Party toward the end of Nehru's premiership.⁸ Surprisingly little consideration has been given to the international dimension of the second 'transfer of power' in India, in the spring of 1964. Likewise, the substantial body of literature addressing US, and to a lesser extent British relations with independent India, largely obscures the significance which Anglo-American policymakers placed on Nehru's passing. Notably, an analysis of Anglo-American intervention in the succession process, is either omitted from, or falls outside the scope of, the path-breaking studies of post-war US and British policy in South Asia, produced by Robert J. McMahon and Anita Inder Singh.⁹

This lacuna in the history of Anglo-American relations with India is all the more surprising, given the strategic importance which Britain and the United States attached to South Asia between the late 1950s and the early 1960s. As the head of a Commonwealth of Nations which included India, and its neighbour, Pakistan, Whitehall retained a significant political interest in the Indian subcontinent after 1947. In addition, the British supplied India's armed forces with the bulk of its training and equipment throughout the 1950s, were formally allied to Pakistan via the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) and South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) security pacts, and from a financial standpoint, remained the region's principal trading partner.¹⁰ In short, Britain's stake in South Asia was considerable. At the same time, in the United States, the Eisenhower administration, which had concluded a separate mutual defence pact with Pakistan in 1954, became concerned at India's vulnerability to the forces of communism. In 1957, Washington looked on with alarm as the Communist Party of India was voted into power in the southern Indian state of Kerala. Likewise, whilst Indo-Soviet relations blossomed around the turn of the decade, India's relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) were embittered

by a border dispute.¹¹ Both Eisenhower, and his successor in the White House, John F. Kennedy, believed that a prosperous and democratic India could serve as a counterweight to communist expansion in the developing world. In consequence, from 1958, the United States provided India with increasing amounts of economic aid and political support.¹² Indeed, for a brief period at the beginning of the 1960s, and in particular following the Sino-Indian border war of late 1962, the United States' effort to contain Asian communism was centred not in South Vietnam, but in India.¹³

This article breaks new ground by drawing upon a wide range of sources, including recently declassified records from archives in both the United Kingdom and the United States, to provide the first systematic look at Anglo-American reactions to the passing of Nehruvian India between 1960 and 1964. Above all, it clarifies why British and US policymakers approached the process of political transition on the Indian subcontinent as both a threat to international security, and paradoxically, as a timely opportunity for reinvigorating India's relationship with the West. In the process, fresh light is thrown on Anglo-American concern that Nehru's health adversely affected Indian policymaking; the involvement of foreign intelligence services in India's domestic politics; and the rationale underpinning decisions taken in London and Washington to back Lal Bahadur Shastri as Nehru's successor.

In the early 1960s, Anglo-American policymakers interpreted India through the prism of Jawaharlal Nehru. This was, perhaps, unsurprising given Nehru's longevity as India's leader, and his dominant influence over the subcontinent's political landscape. A propensity to conflate Nehru with India, and India with Nehru, however, led Britain and the United States to exaggerate the threats that India faced in a post-Nehruvian world. More importantly, such thinking encouraged British and US officials to overestimate the propensity, or indeed, the capacity, of Nehru's successor to redefine India's foreign policy. Having worked to smooth Lal Bahadur Shastri's path to power, once in office, India's second Prime Minister disappointed Anglo-American leaders. In June 1964, America's Ambassador in New Delhi, Chester Bowles, asserted confidently that he expected India's new premier would prove, '... internationally as well as domestically suspicious of [the] Soviet Union, desirous of better relations with Pakistan and friendly to us.'¹⁴ In fact, by the end of 1965, precisely the opposite applied.

I.

In the 1950s, as nascent Afro-Asian leaders decried Western imperialism and flirted with communism, for all his anti-colonial bluster and socialist rhetoric, Jawaharlal Nehru's democratic credentials and advocacy of cold-war non-alignment reassured Anglo-American officials.¹⁵ Within the corridors of Washington and Whitehall, India's Prime Minister was seen as a product of the British imperial system. Educated at Harrow, Trinity College, Cambridge, and London's Inner Temple, toward the end of his life Nehru himself reflected sardonically that he would be remembered as, 'the last Englishman to rule in India'.¹⁶ At the time, it seemed that Nehru would continue to discharge his prime ministerial responsibilities well into the future. Although over seventy, the Indian leader appeared to have lost none of his vitality, and maintained a punishing work schedule. In 1960, Malcolm MacDonald observed that Nehru's, 'body looked as trim as an athlete's, his step was light and energetic, and his mind stayed delightfully fresh'.¹⁷

A year later, as he prepared to welcome Nehru to the United States, President Kennedy was assured by his officials that the ageing Indian premier's, 'power and presence remains basically undiminished'.¹⁸ In January 1961, Kennedy had been propelled into the White House on the back of a campaign which contrasted the energy and dynamism of his 'New Frontier' politics, with the lassitude of an outgoing Republican administration headed by the septuagenarian Eisenhower.¹⁹ Eagerly anticipating his encounter with Nehru, Kennedy was shocked to find the Indian Prime Minister tired and distracted, a shadow of what he had been led to expect.²⁰ In the aftermath of Nehru's lacklustre performance in Washington, Kennedy's Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, concluded that the Indian government was, 'in effect being run by others'.²¹ In off-the-record briefings to US journalists, Rusk underlined the Kennedy administration's disappointment that having touted Nehru as a dynamic totem for Asian democracy, instead, India's leader had proved, 'old and ill... he is *in* office but he doesn't *fill* it'.²²

Nehru had always refused to be drawn on the subject of political succession in India. In February 1957, when asked by journalists to comment on the country's prospects once he had relinquished power, Nehru offered a typically frosty rebuff. 'The question is foolish and meaningless,' he exclaimed. 'I am not running the country. India is shaping herself.'²³ When it came to the thorny problem of nominating a successor, Nehru preferred to sidestep the issue. Anointing an heir, he maintained, would subvert Indian democracy, and perhaps more significantly, do more harm than good to the political aspirations of the individual concerned. 'If a certain person is named,' Nehru rationalised, 'you put that person at a disadvantage... there would be jealousies and the people would possibly react against something being imposed on them.'²⁴ By way of illustration, the Indian premier was fond of citing the example of Sir Anthony Eden. After being groomed for power by Winston Churchill, within months of becoming Britain's Prime Minister in April 1955, Eden found himself embroiled in the Suez fiasco and was forced to resign under a cloud. The irony that a sick, and politically ineffective Churchill, had clung on to power far too long in the 1950s than was good either for himself, his country, or one might plausibly argue, the intensely frustrated Eden, appeared lost on the Indian premier.

Indeed, striking parallels exist between the transfer of power from Churchill to Eden in Britain in the mid-1950s, and that which occurred in India between Nehru and Shastri almost a decade later. In both cases, an iconic national figure lingered in office longer than was medically prudent, and in consequence, compromised their own political legacy, and more significantly, their countries standing on the world stage. Moreover, whilst Churchill ceded authority to an ailing Eden, Nehru's successor had an equally chequered clinical history. A large and growing literature has explored the topic of medicine and leadership. Building upon the earlier work of Hugh L'Etang and Bert Park,²⁵ David Owen has provided valuable insights into the link between the often opaque physical and psychological health of world statesman, and the detrimental impact that illness in political leaders can have on governmental decision making.²⁶ The impact of Eden's health on his disastrous management of the Suez crisis of 1956 has been well documented.²⁷ In the context of health and leadership, however, little has been written on the premiership of Nehru, particularly from the perspective of his 'Suez' - the Sino-Indian War of 1962 - or for that matter, that of Lal Bahadur Shastri. Less still has been made of evidence which suggests that during his final years in power, British and US officials concluded that Nehru's

faltering health risked compromising India's ability to meet a growing communist threat to South Asia, and in turn, the stability of the wider international community.

During the course of 1962, Nehru's health became of increasing concern to Anglo-American policymakers. That spring, the Prime Minister was taken ill on the floor of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of India's Parliament. Diagnosed as suffering from pyelonephritis, a viral infection of the urinary tract, he spent much of the following month in bed. Sir Paul Gore-Booth, who had replaced Malcolm MacDonald as Britain's High Commissioner in India in 1960, noted that when Nehru emerged from his convalescence, he appeared, 'noticeably slower in response. Less curious, more prejudiced, and, above all, more tired'.²⁸ Moreover, Nehru's physical and psychological malaise came at a time when India faced formidable internal and external threats. Domestically, the Indian economy was under strain as the country's Third Five Year Plan faltered. Across the nation food shortages multiplied, regional tensions festered, and public resentment mounted at endemic government graft. On the diplomatic front, Nehru's policy of Sino-Indian friendship lay in tatters. In 1955, the Indian leader set aside his anxiety over China's occupation of Tibet at the beginning of the decade, to sign the Panch Sheel agreement, or Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, with Mao Zedong's government.²⁹ By late 1960, however, Sino-Indian commitments to respect each other's territorial integrity and adhere to a policy of mutual no-aggression rang increasingly hollow, as India and China jostled to occupy contested ground at either end of their Himalayan border. Writing to Nehru's sister, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, in June 1962, India's last Viceroy, and then Chief of Britain's Defence Staff, Lord Louis Mountbatten, bemoaned that, 'your wonderful brother is ill and losing his grip at a time when India needs his help and guidance more than ever'.³⁰

Above all else, Nehru's conduct following the outbreak of Sino-Indian hostilities that autumn, reinforced the sense amongst senior Anglo-American policymakers that India's ailing leader was a liability both to his country, and to the security of wider Asia. Between October and November 1962, having failed to negotiate a border agreement with Nehru, the Chinese government lost patience, and imposed a territorial settlement on India by force of arms. Brushing aside a poorly prepared and inadequately equipped Indian Army, Chinese troops swept into northern India. As the architect of India's China policy, its abject failure left Nehru feeling betrayed, humiliated, and deeply depressed.³¹ In contrast, British and US officials welcomed the Sino-Indian conflict. 'It is indeed,' America's Ambassador to India, John Kenneth Galbraith, exclaimed excitedly, 'the kind of opportunity that comes once in a generation'.³² Specifically, by supplying Nehru's government with sufficient military equipment to defend India, without obviously compromising the nation's neutrality, Anglo-American officials hoped to foster a 'closer understanding, within their general policy of non-alignment, between India and the West'.³³ Equally, given the gravity of India's military predicament, it appeared likely that Nehru could be induced to seek an accommodation with the West's ally, and India's regional rival, Pakistan. In turn, this opened up the possibility that, for the first time since 1947, rather than prepare to fight each other, India and Pakistan would instead work together to defend the subcontinent's borders.³⁴

During the six months between October 1962 and April 1963, however, Anglo-American efforts to utilise the Sino-Indian border war as a platform from which to renegotiate the basis of India's relationships with the West, and Pakistan, floundered. British and US officials attributed primary responsibility for this failure

to Jawaharlal Nehru. On 25 October, as India's Army crumbled, a humbled Nehru conceded to an audience of state officials that his government had been guilty of, 'getting out of touch with the modern world [and]...living in an artificial atmosphere of our own creation'.³⁵ British and US policymakers shared Nehru's assessment. Moreover, in their view, an emotionally unstable, erratic, and short-sighted Indian Prime Minister was to prove himself too old, too infirm, and too inflexible, to respond effectively to the threats and the opportunities presented by China's attack on India.³⁶

From the outset of the Sino-Indian war, Nehru's mismanagement of the military and political dimensions of the border war unnerved London and Washington. In line with his government's policy of non-alignment, the Indian premier initially declined offers of military aid from Britain and the United States. As Chinese forces pushed deeper into India, however, Nehru performed a remarkable *volte face*.³⁷ By the end of October, Anglo-American military supplies were pouring into New Delhi. In late November, with the country's defensive line in the north-east broken, and with the states of Assam and West Bengal effectively defenceless, Nehru appeared on the verge of losing control of his government, and from the perspective of Anglo-American officials, his senses.³⁸ To Washington's alarm, on 20 November, the Indian Premier called for direct US military intervention in the Sino-Indian border war. Writing to John F. Kennedy, Nehru asked the incredulous US President to send twelve squadrons of US supersonic fighters, two squadrons of bombers and a mobile radar network to India.³⁹ At the time, India's border war with China remained a localised and relatively small-scale affair. With the world having peered over the nuclear precipice just weeks before during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy was stunned at Nehru's failure to weigh the global implications of precipitating a Sino-American military confrontation. With Nehru 'clearly in a state of panic', Kennedy concluded that the ageing Indian leader had lost both his nerve, and with it, his sense of reason.⁴⁰

An ill-conceived bid by Nehru to retain the services of his Defence Minister, and closest political confidante, V.K. Krishna Menon, had an equally sobering effect on Anglo-American perceptions of the India's leader's faltering judgment. As India's Defence Minister, Menon was held culpable for the nation's military humiliation by his parliamentary colleagues, the nation's press, and the Indian public. Nehru doggedly resisted calls to sack Menon, however, and only accepted his 'resignation' on 7 November, once Congress Party leaders confirmed that his own position as Prime Minister would become untenable were Menon to remain in government.⁴¹ In fact, by the end of October, Washington had become so concerned at Nehru's failure to comprehend the corrosive impact that Menon was having on domestic and international support for his government, that a plan was hatched to discredit the defence minister.⁴² In late October, Carl Kaysen, Kennedy's deputy national security advisor, asked the British to plant stories in UK newspapers attacking Menon. Equally keen to see the demise of 'Nehru's evil genius', the British, nevertheless, rejected Kaysen's proposal.⁴³ Vilifying in Menon in the British press, Whitehall reasoned, would raise Indian hackles, and prove 'more likely to save Menon than send him under'.⁴⁴ The temptation for British and US officials to covertly intervene in Indian politics would prove harder to resist, however, when the struggle to succeed Nehru gathered momentum in early 1964.

A further cause of Anglo-American disillusionment with Nehru centred on the Indian premier's refusal to embrace the Sino-Indian war as an opportunity to

normalise Indo-Pakistan relations. In August 1947, the partition of British India into the sovereign states of India and Pakistan occurred against a background of recrimination, unprecedented communal violence and mass population migration. Partition threw up a number of intractable territorial and political disputes, which subsequently poisoned relations between India and Pakistan. Chief amongst these was Pakistan's claim on the Indian-controlled state of Kashmir. Indo-Pakistan enmity, as Anglo-American policymakers were all too aware, threatened to compromise their strategic plans for South Asia. As the British Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) rationalised, it would be 'self-contradictory' for Britain and the United States to help India build a 'credible deterrent to a very real Chinese military threat', if in the process, their disgruntled Pakistani ally were pushed into the arms of Beijing or Moscow.⁴⁵ Indeed, to the irritation of Anglo-American officials, the limited military support India received from Britain and the United States in October 1962, prompted Pakistan's President, Ayub Khan, to take out a regional reinsurance policy, and cultivate closer ties with China.⁴⁶ By continuing to supply India with military aid, Britain's High Commissioner in Karachi underlined on 7 November: 'We could well find that we had forfeited Pakistan friendship and Western alignment once and for all without gaining any lasting advantage in India.'⁴⁷

Accordingly, in late November, British and US policymakers used their military leverage over India to cajole a resentful Nehru into holding ministerial-level talks with Pakistan, on Kashmir and other related areas of dispute.⁴⁸ To the frustration of London and Washington, however, over the subsequent six months, six rounds of discussions succeeded only in embittering Indo-Pakistan relations. Rightly or wrongly, Anglo-American officials had long viewed Nehru as the chief obstacle to an Indo-Pakistan accord. Back in August 1961, Gore-Booth observed that as a descendant of Kashmiri Brahmins, the Indian premier appeared, 'so emotionally involved over the integration of his family's homeland into India, that on Kashmir at least he is completely irrational'. 'We shall have to wait for Mr. Nehru's successor,' London was advised, 'before we can have an Indian Government willing to consider a compromise [on Kashmir]'.⁴⁹ In November 1962, Gore-Booth's assessment continued to ring true in Whitehall. In New Delhi, conversations Britain's Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Duncan Sandys, held with members of the Indian cabinet indicated that India's Home Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Minister for Economic and Defence Co-ordination, T.T. Krishnamachari, and Defence Minister, Yashwantrao Chavan, favoured reaching a settlement with Pakistan in some form.⁵⁰ Moreover, India's Commonwealth Secretary, Y.D. Gundevia, assured British officials that momentum was building within the Congress Party for an 'urgent settlement' of the Kashmir dispute.⁵¹ In contrast, Sandys discovered a 'highly emotional' Nehru to be adamantly opposed to an accommodation with Pakistan. Slamming his fist against a table, the Indian leader insisted to the British Secretary of State, that India's defeat by China would not be followed by 'surrender to Pakistani blackmail'.⁵²

To British and US policymakers, India's defeat during the Sino-Indian war was symptomatic of the nation's deeper political malaise. In Nehru, India had a leader rooted in the past, a premier seemingly unable to adapt to new and unfamiliar political and military challenges. In this sense, Anglo-American officials welcomed the end of the Nehru era. The advent of fresh, progressive, and hopefully pro-Western Indian Prime Minister would, it was hoped, revitalise their governments'

flagging relationship with India. Voicing a frustration shared by many of his colleagues, Ronald Belcher, Britain's Acting High Commissioner in New Delhi, lamented that the Indian leader's once formidable political powers had been eroded by a combination of old age and illness. 'The creative element had gone from his thinking,' Belcher later observed, 'he was increasingly uncommunicative and forgetful', and, 'judged day-to-day events by the ideas and emotions of his past'. In short, Nehru had become, 'a drag on the proper administration of Indian affairs...[and] an increasingly unrealistic and at times ineffective arbiter of her external policies'.⁵³

II

Nehru's management of the Sino-Indian conflict had a similarly detrimental effect on his standing in India. In December 1962, British officials were advised by contacts inside the Congress Party that, 'if it had not been that Nehru was the only politician with mass support, attempts would already have been made to oust him'.⁵⁴ Within a matter of months, Nehru's value as an electoral asset appeared less certain. Visiting New Delhi in May 1963, Mountbatten was appalled by the levels of incompetence and corruption he encountered. 'There is a complete lack of leadership', Mountbatten observed with characteristic self-effacement. 'Everybody is very pessimistic about the future. Several people have said to me "why don't you come back and run the country again?"'⁵⁵ In 1962, Congress had triumphed in India's third general election, securing 361 of the 494 seats available in the Lok Sabha.⁵⁶ A year later, the Party suffered successive by-election defeats in the previously safe seats of Amroka, Farrukkabad, and Rajkot.⁵⁷

Having arrived back in New Delhi in July to take up a second stint as US Ambassador, Chester Bowles was shocked by the political developments that had taken place since he had last served in India a decade before. 'In my first twenty-four hours [in India]', Bowles confided to his diary, 'it is apparent that I will be a witness to the collapse of an era, or rather I should say to its petering out. Nehru was 80 per cent of Indian government authority; now he must be 30 per cent as the struggle for supremacy is on with a vengeance'.⁵⁸ Scenting political blood, the following month opposition MPs tabled a motion of no confidence in Nehru's government in the Lok Sabha. Nehru comfortably survived the challenge. In the process, however, he was subjected to the unedifying spectacle of his parliamentary opponents banging their seats and shouting: 'Quit, Nehru quit!'.⁵⁹ With his authority diminished, Congress leaders flexing their muscle, and critics sniping at him from the political sidelines, as the Central intelligence Agency (CIA) noted: 'For the first time, Indian politicians, both within his party and outside it, seemed to be increasingly willing to contemplate seriously a period when Nehru would not be around'.⁶⁰

Indications that Nehru's premiership was drawing to a close prompted British and US policymakers to take stock of the threats that independent India's first transfer of power posed to the country's internal stability, and in consequence, its external relations. In private, Anglo-American officials continued to pillory Nehru for his 'irritating characteristics of stubbornness and ungratefulness'.⁶¹ They were aware, however, that in a country notable for the range of its cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, Nehru's power and prestige had acted as a powerful unifying influence in the past. Back in October 1958, Malcolm MacDonald had expressed scepticism that India could long remain, 'a wholly compact nation'. For the majority

of their history, MacDonald argued, Indians had been divided, and only had only been forced together by exceptional internal figures, or strong external forces. 'In the near future much will depend on whether Mr. Nehru will be succeeded by a national leader,' the British High Commissioner had predicted, '... who can preserve a robust national unity.'⁶²

British and US officials were equally concerned that a weak and divided India might be subsumed by communal violence. The country's 360,000,000 Hindu citizens lived cheek by jowl with 50,000,000 Muslims, and 20,000,000 followers of other minority religions, such as Sikhism, Jainism, and Christianity. In January 1964, a spiral of religious and communal disturbances that had begun in Kashmir the previous December, claimed hundreds of lives in East Pakistan and West Bengal.⁶³ Many British officials then serving in India had witnessed at first hand the communal holocaust that engulfed the subcontinent in 1947, and were left with an abiding sense of the fragility of the country's communal consensus. While lauding the effort that Nehru had made to keep India a 'truly secular state', the British suspected that the commitment of the country's Hindu majority to this ideal remained 'dangerously shallow'.⁶⁴ Whitehall's anxiety was echoed in Washington. At the CIA, the Agency's South Asian analysts noted that the 'conservative and illiterate masses of India' were, on the whole, more susceptible to the emotionally charged sermons delivered by religious extremists, than they were to the measured rhetoric employed by proponents of secularism. In India's 1962 general election, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, or Indian People's Party, the standard bearer of Hindu traditionalism, had polled only 6.1% of the national vote. In its northern stronghold of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, however, the Jan Sangh had run Congress close. For many of India's Muslims, Nehru embodied the nation's commitment to secularism, and as the CIA emphasised, was considered to be 'their best guarantee that the usual social and economic discrimination against Muslims by Hindus would at least not be officially countenanced'.⁶⁵ A new Indian premier, and particularly one more associated with Hindu orthodoxy than Nehruvian agnosticism, faced an uphill battle to retain the confidence of his Muslim citizens. The CRO doubted that any future Indian government, whatever the strength of its opposition to communalism, 'can in all circumstances stand against it with the effectiveness of Nehru's instant and unquestioned resolution'.⁶⁶

The spectre of future civil disorder in India led Anglo-American officials to question whether, in the long term, the country would remain a democracy. 'It is a mark of his [Nehru's] success,' the British reflected, 'that so far India has remained a country where men can freely speak their minds. Will his successors be willing or able to maintain this sort of vigilance to keep India on the democratic rails?'⁶⁷ Although Indians had readily assimilated the concepts of elections and of parliamentary debate, the idea of representative government was still a relatively recent phenomenon in the subcontinent. By the late 1950s, Pakistan, having initially embraced democracy, had drifted toward a more autocratic form of government dominated by the military. 'Did Jawaharlal Nehru create foundations for viable new democratic Indian society,' Chester Bowles pondered, 'or did he simply postpone a political debacle?'⁶⁸

Having experienced at first hand the confusion and uncertainty which followed the traumatic transition of presidential power from Kennedy to Lyndon Johnson in the United States in November 1963, to Robert Komer, the National Security Council's South Asian expert, it appeared possible that India might descend into

'disarray' on Nehru's death. 'A deep political crisis [in India]', Komer counselled senior Washington policymakers, 'is not inconceivable'.⁶⁹ India's President, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, shared Komer's concern. In January 1964, Radhakrishnan confided to Gore-Booth, that he had been left 'deeply depressed' by India's lapse into a national torpor at the very moment that communism was making inroads across Asia. Cambodia, Radhakrishnan suggested, was shifting into the Chinese orbit. The situation in South Vietnam was deteriorating. In Laos, the Prime Minister had entered into hopeless negotiations with the Pathet Lao, and Burma was pretty well in communist hands. The emergence of a communist state in Indonesia seemed only a matter of time. Meanwhile, an ill and ineffectual Nehru remained dangerously quiescent.⁷⁰ Endorsing Radhakrishnan's exposition of the 'Domino Thesis', Gore-Booth cautioned the CRO that: 'Almost anything might emerge from all this [the succession] from the best to the worst.'⁷¹ British fears that India might prove susceptible to the imposition of an authoritarian system of government were, in part, informed by cultural factors. Officials in the British High Commission in New Delhi noted that Nehru, above all others, had insisted on his countryman adhering, 'fundamental standards, many of them by no means natural to India'. The strong stand taken by the Indian premier in favour of universal suffrage and against nepotism, corruption, and other abuses of power, were attributed, in large part, to 'the Westerner - indeed the Britisher - in him.' It appeared debatable, in the eyes of many British officials that such 'ideal standards' could be maintained, 'in this vast Eastern and largely Hindu society'.⁷²

In an international context, British officials were concerned that Nehru's passing would see a diminution in Whitehall's influence on the subcontinent. The Indian leader's affinity for Britain's traditions, culture and society, and personal friendships with members of the British establishment, was not, by and large, shared by his political contemporaries.⁷³ In 1955, the US State Department had complained that when it came to dealing with India, '... the British have a certain advantage over us in the form of Mr. Nehru's adoration of English civilisation and individuals ...'.⁷⁴ In particular, the intimate bond which Nehru had established with Lord Mountbatten, proved a diplomatic boon for successive British governments. When India considered purchasing Soviet bombers in 1955, was tempted to acquire Moscow's latest supersonic fighters in 1962, or appeared poised to scupper Indo-Pakistan talks on Kashmir in 1963, Mountbatten had been dispatched to New Delhi to talk Nehru round.⁷⁵ In Nehru's absence, one official from the CRO underlined, 'we shall no longer have the enormously valuable access to the Indian Government's inner councils which Lord Mountbatten's personal friendship with him gave us at crucial moments'.⁷⁶

Moreover, the end of Nehru era carried implications for both the future of the British Commonwealth, and that of the Anglo-American special relationship. After August 1947, many Indians evidenced feelings of ambivalence, if not hostility, toward the British Commonwealth. More than anyone, it was Nehru who ensured that India remained inside the Commonwealth after it had become a republic in 1950, and had stayed in during periods of acute Anglo-Indian tension, most notably in the Suez Crisis in 1956. 'India's Commonwealth membership is by no means so firmly established,' the CRO acknowledged in 1964. 'If really serious strains should again develop in Indo-British relations or in inter-Commonwealth relations generally, Nehru's ultimately effective championship of Indian membership, and of the value of the modern Commonwealth itself, could be critically missed.'⁷⁷ For if

India left the Commonwealth, the British recognised, other Afro-Asian members were far more likely to follow suit. Likewise, the Foreign Office acknowledged that in the 1960s, as the United States focused on the developing world as a crucial cold-war battleground, 'it is our [British] influence and knowledge of the world outside Europe, especially in the Commonwealth, which has most value to-day in the eyes of Americans ...'. It was in this context that the British looked to 'preserve the Anglo-American partnership ... by support[ing] India as the counter-attraction to China in Asia.'⁷⁸ Lacking the resources to make a significant military or economic impact on the subcontinent, the value of Whitehall's contribution to the Anglo-American partnership in South Asia lay in its ability to bring informal influence, or soft power, to bear in India. This would prove far more difficult to do, British officials conceded, without Nehru as India's leader.⁷⁹

III.

The hopes and fears which British and US policymakers harboured in relation to India's future, acquired added piquancy on 6 January 1964, when Nehru suffered a stroke during the Congress Party's annual conference in Bhubaneswar, eastern India. Attempts by the Indian government to play down the seriousness of Nehru's illness, contrasted with images of the listless Indian leader being carried in a wheelchair from the aeroplane that returned him to New Delhi a week later.⁸⁰ Back in Washington, the State Department took the precaution of asking US medical experts to review Nehru's clinical background. Their conclusions made for grim reading. 'Given Nehru's history,' the State Department was advised, 'a recurrence of Thrombosis is likely. This might be in a day, week or decade. He [Nehru] is walking on eggs.'⁸¹ Preparing for the worse, State Department officers began the macabre task of drafting condolence messages from Lyndon Johnson to Radhakrishnan, Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit.⁸²

Of the candidates vying to succeed Nehru as India's Prime Minister, British and US officials favoured the veteran Congress politician, Lal Bahadur Shastri. A diminutive five feet and two inches tall, Shastri's physique and unassuming temperament had earned him the sobriquet, 'The Sparrow'. Having joined the Congress Party whilst still in his teens, Shastri's steady rise through its ranks culminated in his appointment as India's Home Minister in 1961. At Nehru's behest, from August 1963 he had spent time outside of government, revitalising the Congress Party's administrative machinery. By the following January, however, he was back in the Indian cabinet as Minister without Portfolio, with responsibility for the Cabinet Secretariat and the departments of External Affairs and Atomic Energy. To Anglo-American policymakers Shastri represented something of an enigma. He had never travelled outside South Asia, and lacked an international profile.⁸³ More significantly, question marks surrounded Shastri's health. In October 1959, he had suffered a major heart attack. Although apparently fully recovered, many political commentators ruled Shastri out of the succession race on medical grounds.⁸⁴

In his favour, however, Shastri was widely regarded as, 'pleasant, intelligent, [and] highly public spirited'. The British noted that he had acquired, 'the rare reputation in Indian politics of complete freedom from corruption and political jobbery'.⁸⁵ In addition, he appeared appropriately anti-communist, and was thought to hold moderate views on economic and foreign policy issues.⁸⁶ The fifty-nine-year-old Shastri, Washington concluded early in 1964, would prove a 'cautious' and

'pragmatic' Indian leader, whose consensual style would be welcomed by a majority within the Congress Party.⁸⁷ Indeed, from an Anglo-American standpoint, the combination of Shastri's reputation for political expediency and his occupation of the centre ground in Indian politics, constituted his principal strength. As a skilled conciliator, Shastri was expected to minimise the fissiparous, communal, and economic risks associated with a transfer of power, and preside over 'a more reasonable Indian Government, even on Kashmir'.⁸⁸ At the same time, British and US officials were encouraged by indications that Shastri would welcome closer and more harmonious relations between India and the West.⁸⁹ With 'Nehru on his last legs', Robert Komer assured Lyndon Johnson in April 1964, '... Shastri – the heir apparent, looks good from our viewpoint'.⁹⁰

The same could not be said of the leader of the Congress Party's right wing, and India's former Finance Minister, Morarji Desai. A devout Hindu, Desai practised yoga and spun *khaddar* each morning, championed prohibition, kept to a Spartan dietary regime, and observed a vow of celibacy.⁹¹ Renowned for his fiscal conservatism, advocacy of free enterprise, and pro-Western outlook, Desai was well regarded by India's business community and Anglo-American policymakers. By 1958, US officials had marked him out as a man to watch within the Indian cabinet, and 'one of the leading candidates for the Prime Ministership after Nehru'.⁹² The British agreed, concluding in July 1962 that Desai was well placed in the succession stakes. 'If Mr. Nehru were to die tomorrow,' the CRO opined, '... it is reasonable to assume... the appointment as Prime Minister of Mr. Morarji Desai'.⁹³ As a future leader of India, however, British and US officials considered Desai to have a number of serious drawbacks. With age and infirmity a central issue in the succession debate, although in good health, at nearly sixty-eight years of age, the State Department felt that Desai was, 'probably past his peak'. More important, however, was his tendency to divide both party and country. 'Desai ...' the US State Department observed, 'is bitterly opposed by the [Congress] party's leftist faction and is disliked by the dominant party leaders of the south because of his inflexible attitudes.' Moreover, Desai's reputation as 'a Hindu nationalist' generated unsettled India's Muslim community.⁹⁴ When it came to Indo-Pakistan relations, the CRO cautioned, Desai's 'rigid and extreme anti-Pakistan convictions would make his appointment [as India's Prime Minister] little less than a disaster'.⁹⁵

From the left wing of the Congress Party, Indira Gandhi appeared to be Shastri's principal challenger for the premiership. In 1963, Gandhi's political power had grown as that of her father had faded. A competent political performer in her own right, she had been an active President of the Congress Party between 1959 and 1960.⁹⁶ Although Gandhi repeatedly disclaimed interest in becoming India's next leader, in January 1964 she outpolled all other candidates in elections to the Congress Party Working Committee, and was rumoured to covet the post of Minister of External Affairs.⁹⁷ Furthermore, from her position as Nehru's nursemaid, appointments secretary, and political confidante, Gandhi appeared well placed to manipulate the outcome of the succession process. In a cable sent to Washington on 28 January, Chester Bowles underlined that: 'Having assumed a role similar to that of Mrs Woodrow Wilson, to whom she [Gandhi] is being compared, she controls access to the PM and is only person who regularly consults him. She is thus in unique position to influence PM on any issue ...'.⁹⁸ Any aspirations Gandhi may have had to succeed her father were handicapped, however, by the fact that she held no elective office, lacked the broad political appeal necessary to sustain a

challenge for the premiership, and had not previously served in government.⁹⁹ Bowles derided her long-term political future, asserting that although she might eventually end up in a future Indian cabinet, Gandhi 'would probably drift out of active politics in a year or two'.¹⁰⁰ In fact, as the succession struggle approached its climax in the late spring of 1964, Indira Gandhi rejected appeals from Congress Party officials to throw her hat into the leadership ring. Daunted by her lack of government experience and emotionally exhausted from the strain of caring for her father during his long illness, Gandhi rejected the opportunity to succeed her father.¹⁰¹

IV.

By the spring of 1964, British and US policymakers had become exasperated by Nehru's refusal to step down from power and bring an end to his lame-duck administration. After calling on India's premier in March, a despondent Chester Bowles informed Washington that: 'It was quite impossible to communicate with him [Nehru].' 'His mind was simply not in gear. . . it is difficult for me to believe that he can last long as effective political force in India.'¹⁰² Many Indians felt likewise. To B.K. Nehru, India's Ambassador to the United States, Nehru's illness had, 'left him with an increasing inability to grapple with pressing problems or to take decisions'.¹⁰³ The Prime Minister's increasingly rare public appearances provided further evidence, if any were needed, of his faltering grip on power. In April, the British noted that he had appeared 'terribly and pathetically old and absent' during a visit to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.¹⁰⁴ Concluding that Nehru's time as Prime Minister was drawing rapidly to a close, Anglo-American officials began contemplating how they could enhance Lal Bahadur Shastri's prospects of becoming his successor.

In Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, British and US officials identified a powerful ally in their bid to smooth Shastri's path to power. The seventy-four-year-old Radhakrishnan had served as India's President since May 1962, having been Vice-President for the previous decade. A renowned scholar and former Oxford don, he came to the presidency determined to exercise more of the constitutional power vested in his office than had his predecessor, Rajendra Prasad. On paper, Radhakrishnan's powers were impressive. The President held supreme command of the country's armed forces, could declare a state of emergency and impose central rule in any state of the Indian union, and crucially, was responsible for summoning and dismissing Parliament and appointing prime ministers. Radhakrishnan took the last of these responsibilities extremely seriously. India's President, the CIA observed, had indicated in the past that he would, 'seek to influence the choice of a successor to Nehru, either temporary or permanent, in any way he could'. Moreover, the politically conservative Radhakrishnan was expected to favour 'a moderate' as the country's next premier, 'such as Shastri'.¹⁰⁵ Back in January 1964, Radhakrishnan had confirmed the veracity of the CIA's analysis to Mountbatten. The nation's future unity, Radhakrishnan argued, would hinge upon the appointment of a conciliatory leader, who was acceptable to both the left and right wings of the Congress Party. With so much at stake, India's President assured Mountbatten, he would, 'intervene strongly and if necessary decisively', in the succession race.¹⁰⁶

Following Nehru's death, the British and US governments quickly focused on ensuring that Radhakrishnan's actions matched up to his rhetoric. Within hours of

arriving in India on 28 May to attend Nehru's funeral, both Mountbatten, and Britain's Prime Minister, Alec Douglas Home, held talks with Radhakrishnan at Rashtrapati Bhavan, the President's official residence.¹⁰⁷ The mechanics of the succession process dominated the discussions. Mountbatten, in particular, in a throwback to 1947, interfered shamelessly in India's internal affairs. During the course of an hour-long interview with Radhakrishnan, Mountbatten lobbied for the pro-Western Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit to be made India's Minister for External Affairs, questioned the appointment of Gulzarilal Nanda as interim Prime Minister, and urged India's President to see that Shastri was the country's next leader.¹⁰⁸ When it came to Shastri, at least, Mountbatten was pushing against an open door. Steps had been taken, Radhakrishnan confirmed, to ensure that Shastri would 'romp home by a big majority' when the Congress Parliamentary Party met to elect its new leader. Britain, Mountbatten was comforted, could look forward to, 'a new India, more forthcoming and friendly and less difficult'.¹⁰⁹ Chester Bowles was similarly reassured after making 'a private call' on Radhakrishnan later the same day. A new Indian government, headed by Shastri, and "more pro-West than ever", Radhakrishnan assured the US Ambassador, would be in place within a matter of days.¹¹⁰

Nevertheless, to guard against any unpleasant last-minute surprises, Bowles took the precaution of inserting 'observers' into the campaign teams of both Shastri and Morarji Desai. Nervous of being caught 'meddling in Indian affairs', the British chose instead to rely on established contacts inside Congress Party headquarters to provide, 'a running commentary on the state of play between the rival [leadership] factions'.¹¹¹ Indeed, one of the most intriguing facets of Western involvement in the election of India's second Prime Minister surrounds the extent to which the British and US governments provided covert support to Lal Bahadur Shastri's candidacy. From early 1964, the British High Commission's political staff in New Delhi actively 'encouraged' senior Indian politicians, 'to give those who want to pursue a middle of the road political policy . . . the greatest chance possible' of succeeding Nehru.¹¹² Less obvious, is the role that foreign intelligence and propaganda agencies, chiefly the Soviet Security Service (KGB), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and more obscure bodies, such as the British Foreign Office's Information Research Department (IRD), played in the succession process. Likewise, important questions remain over the degree to which British and US officials sought to influence the succession process, through the pages of the Western and Indian press.

The scope and scale of foreign intelligence operations in India grew significantly from the late 1950s, as the subcontinent developed into an increasingly important cold-war arena. In the 1960s, the KGB residency in New Delhi, which eventually housed the largest Soviet intelligence presence in the developing world, undertook an array of 'active measures' designed to enhance Moscow's influence in India. These encompassed secretly funding the election expenses and political propaganda of leading left-wing Indian politicians, such as Krishna Menon. In 1964, they also included a KGB propaganda operation, conducted at the behest of the Soviet presidium, to bolster Shastri's leadership campaign. The rationale underpinning Moscow's decision to support Shastri was almost certainly based on its antipathy for Morarji Desai. Given the option between Shastri becoming India's next leader, or Desai, the doyen of India's right wing, the Soviets opted to back the lesser of two evils.¹¹³ The considerable KGB presence in South Asia, however, attracted far less attention from India's press and politicians than that of America's intelligence

services. From the mid-1950s, Nehru voiced concern that the United States, in particular, was 'carrying on their espionage and secret service activities [in India]. They have also been buying up newspapers and spreading a network of publicity organisations.' 'We are more concerned with what the Americans are trying to do,' Nehru stated in June 1955, 'than the others.'¹¹⁴

By the early 1960s, the CIA had a sizable, growing, and active presence in India. In the words of one former US official serving in New Delhi at the time, 'the CIA was very, very, active... it was very large, and very invasive. The CIA was everywhere.'¹¹⁵ To date, however, with the exception of studies exposing operations run by the Agency from northern India and Nepal against Chinese-controlled Tibet, little has emerged of CIA activity in India.¹¹⁶ Tantalising glimpses of CIA complicity in the subversion of communist governments in Kerala and West Bengal have been provided by former US Ambassador's and USEmbassy officials.¹¹⁷ Similarly, evidence from both Indian and US sources suggest that the CIA proved successful in recruiting important 'assets' inside the Indian government. Notably, M.O. Mathai, who served as Jawaharlal Nehru's Private Secretary until the late 1950s, is amongst those alleged to have worked for US intelligence. Nehru's most prominent biographer has gone as far as to state that, 'It can... be safely assumed that, from 1946 to 1959, the CIA had access to every paper passing through Nehru's Secretariat.'¹¹⁸

Whilst the charges levelled against Mathai remain contentious, former State Department officers have corroborated claims of collusion between Indian government officials and the CIA. One US diplomat has recalled how the CIA station in New Delhi boasted that it could obtain a copy of any document produced by the Indian government. 'So I put this to the test once,' the official recalled, 'and they [the CIA] provided it for me.'¹¹⁹ Indeed, it does seem that the CIA was remarkably well informed on the substance of discussions taking place inside the Indian cabinet throughout the Nehru era.¹²⁰ Moreover, as the US government's focus on India intensified in the wake of the Sino-Indian War, the CIA strengthened its links with India's Intelligence Bureau (IB), by sponsoring joint Indo-US covert operations against the People's Republic of China.¹²¹

The CIA strongly endorsed the State Department's view that the 'succession problem' in India represented a threat to US interests. '[The] continuing successful economic and political development in India is immensely important to US policy objectives,' an Agency report emphasised in January 1964. 'The Congress Party must be on guard to maintain the strength and unity necessary to guarantee an easy transition to a new government if that should be required in the near future.'¹²² On previous occasions, when Washington had felt its wider interests threatened by developments on the subcontinent, be it in Kerala in the late 1950s, or West Bengal in the late 1960s, the White house had ordered the CIA to intervene in India's domestic politics. The CIA undoubtedly retained the capacity to do likewise when it came to the selection of Nehru's successor. Before taking up the post of US Ambassador in India in 1961, John Kenneth Galbraith had been alarmed to discover that the CIA had set aside millions of dollars to subsidise the election campaigns of 'friendly' Indian politicians, and to finance the publication of Indian newspapers and magazines of an 'adequately anti-communist temper'. Galbraith's subsequent attempts to curtail CIA activity in India met with only partial success.¹²³ As one irate member of his Embassy staff recalled, the CIA continued, issuing 'bribes, peddling highly tendentious material, buying off newspapers – of course,

without telling us anything about it.’¹²⁴ CIA records relating to the Agency’s domestic operations in India remained classified. However, given the strategic importance which Washington attached to South Asia, and the CIA’s history of intervention in India’s domestic politics, it seems plausible, if not probable to assume, that the Agency provided covert support to the Anglo-American diplomatic effort to influence the appointment of Nehru’s successor.

Indeed, when it came to India, the CIA was by no means alone in ‘peddling’ propaganda, and attempting to purchase influence. Within the US Embassy in New Delhi, both Galbraith and Chester Bowles appreciated the power of the press to shape the political agenda on the subcontinent. A former Madison Avenue advertising executive, Bowles, in particular, assiduously courted New Delhi’s international press corps, and kept up a regular correspondence with *New York Times* luminaries Harrison Salisbury and Scotty Reston, back in the United States. Salisbury routinely received ‘highly confidential’ memoranda from Bowles, which laid out the Ambassador’s views on a wide range of issues affecting the subcontinent. On occasions, these included official policy papers prepared by Embassy staff in Delhi, ‘for strictly off-the-record use’.¹²⁵ Britain’s High Commission matched Bowles’ enthusiasm for political ‘spin’. Its officials met regularly with senior Indian pressmen, and local correspondents from the major British dailies, for ‘off the record exchanges of view’.¹²⁶ In January 1964, in one typical exchange with S. Mulgaokar, editor of the influential *Hindustan Times*, Ronald Belcher baldly stated Whitehall’s position that India needed a change of leadership. ‘From the point of view of India’s international standing,’ Belcher informed Mulgaokar, ‘it was certainly important to remove as soon as possible the growing impression of a drift and inefficiency which was gaining currency almost everywhere these days, largely as a result of Mr. Nehru’s age and ill health.’¹²⁷

From a British perspective, further intriguing questions surround the involvement of the Foreign Office’s Information Research Department in the transition of power from Nehru to Shastri. The IRD had been established in 1948 to counter the spread of Soviet propaganda in Britain and throughout the developing world.¹²⁸ During the 1950s, IRD personnel were seconded to British diplomatic missions abroad, and tasked with feeding anti-communist literature to networks of local journalists and politicians. Although IRD first established contacts in India in the early 1950s, most notably with B.N. Mullik, the head of India’s Intelligence Bureau,¹²⁹ it was not until January 1962 that the first permanent IRD representative, Peter Joy, was posted to New Delhi. Unlike the British Security Service (MI5), which employed a ‘declared’, or overt, Security Liaison Officer (SLO) in New Delhi,¹³⁰ Joy operated covertly under cover provided by the British Information Service. After a difficult initial period during which Indian non-alignment hampered his efforts to recruit local contacts, the onset of the Sino-Indian War transformed Joy’s fortunes. A demand emerged almost overnight for IRD material on the evils of Chinese communism from Indian journalists and research centres, as well as from government departments such as the Ministry of External Affairs, Press Information Bureau, and All India Radio. By early 1964, Joy had established active relationships with over 100 ‘well-placed and influential individuals throughout India’, some of whom received covert payments from IRD. In addition, two publishing houses in the Indian capital were busy disseminating IRD material on a non-attributable basis.¹³¹

Under Joy’s guidance, the IRD was particularly successful in cultivating ‘assets’ in the Indian press. One IRD survey estimated that its material had appeared in over

500 Indian newspaper articles during the course of 1964 alone. 'We are able,' the IRD crowed, 'to get the right article into the right paper at the right time.'¹³² Moreover, the IRD interpreted its role in India in the broadest possible context. 'Britain's interest [in India] lies in a strong Central Government,' a senior IRD official observed, 'to the maintenance of which I.R.D. no less than any other instruments of British policy, should have a contribution to make.' Having invited IRD into India two years earlier, it appears likely that Paul Gore-Booth and the British High Commission utilised Joy's influence with the Indian press to augment their own 'of the record briefings' on the succession question. Notably, in early 1964, as the race to succeed Nehru approached its climax, Peter Joy recorded with satisfaction that Mulgaokar's *Hindustan Times*, in particular, had 'not been inactive on our behalf recently'. The subsequent evolution of IRD activity in India adds to the suspicion that that the role the organisation played on the subcontinent extended well beyond the dissemination of anti-communist propaganda. In 1967, having expanded its operation from New Delhi into Calcutta and Madras, and with India's fourth general election looming, IRD lobbied Whitehall for a more interventionist remit on the subcontinent. 'IRD should,' its management argued, 'concentrate more than hitherto on the cultivation of influential Congress Ministers, M.P.'s and senior civil servants.'¹³³

On 1 June 1964, as Radhakrishnan had predicted, soundings taken amongst MPs, Cabinet Ministers and the Chief Ministers of India's States confirmed Shastri as the Congress Party's choice to succeed Nehru as India's leader. The next day, Gulzarilal Nanda proposed, and Morarji Desai seconded, Lal Bahadur Shastri's nomination as leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party. 'This will effectively make him [Shastri] Prime Minister,' the British High Commission reported back to the CRO, '[and] after a contest far less disruptive than many people here and abroad had apprehended.'¹³⁴ Or, as the *Guardian* noted wryly, in comparison with the contentious transfer of power from Harold Macmillan to Alec Douglas-Home that had taken place in London the previous October, Shastri had been installed as Nehru's successor, 'with more dispatch, and much more dignity, than was the new Prime Minister of Britain'.¹³⁵

V.

Lal Bahadur Shastri had never met senior British or US government officials before he became India's Prime Minister. The man who had taken charge of the world's largest democracy was an enigma to all but a handful of middle-ranking Anglo-American officials. Shastri had been bequeathed a host of potentially explosive political problems, from escalating food prices and disquiet over the adoption of Hindi as India's official language, to embittered Sino-Indian and Indo-Pakistani relations. Many Western observers drew comparisons between Nehru's passing and that of Franklin Delano Roosevelt almost twenty years earlier. On both occasions a figure of global standing had died in office during a period of national transition, and had been replaced by a relative unknown, in Roosevelt's case the former senator from Missouri, Harry S. Truman. 'Not many [people] knew Shastri,' one US diplomat stationed in India at the time recalled. 'Who was he? What would he do?'¹³⁶

Chester Bowles, who had had little contact with Shastri before he became Prime Minister, was immediately taken with India's new leader. 'His diminutive size has

tended to underline the impression of a quiet, unassuming, weak, meek man,' Bowles informed Dean Rusk. 'However...I have been impressed with his intellectual qualities, his flexibility of mind and what appears to be an inner strength.'¹³⁷ The British agreed with Bowles' assessment, noting in early June that Shastri's 'actions and speeches since he stepped forward from Nehru's overpowering shadow have shown an encouraging grasp and self-confidence.'¹³⁸ British and US policymakers did not expect Shastri to deviate significantly from the four pillars of Nehruvian policy: democracy; secularism; a mixed, socialist orientated economy; and a non-aligned foreign policy. It was deemed likely, however, that he would evidence less of an 'attachment for the USSR and "socialism"' than Nehru, and in the long run, prove more flexible on a range of issues from Kashmir to the role played by private enterprise in the Indian economy.¹³⁹ Likewise, whereas Nehru had frustrated Anglo-American officials with his 'emotional' and 'impressionistic' manner, Shastri appeared pragmatic and level-headed.¹⁴⁰ In conversation with Ellsworth Bunker, who had served as US Ambassador to India in the late 1950s, the leading Indian industrialist and Congress stalwart, B.M Birla, reinforced US perceptions that Shastri was someone with whom they could do business. 'The general attitude in [Shastri's] Government,' Birla assured Bunker, 'would be more friendly toward the US, the UK and the West than it was under Mr. Nehru's administration.'¹⁴¹

Given Shastri's inexperience in foreign affairs Whitehall approached the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference, which was scheduled to take place in London, in July 1964, as a valuable opportunity to get to know the 'stranger' at the head of India's government, and more importantly, to influence his global outlook. 'What he [Shastri] learns - and how he learns it - at the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Meeting', CRO officials suggested, 'will... be of great importance'.¹⁴² In particular, the British hoped to 'educate' Shastri on the Chinese threat to Southeast Asia, and the principles underpinning the UK's defence, disarmament and colonial policies.¹⁴³ In a precursor of things to come, however, Shastri suffered a heart attack on 26 June, and was forced him to cancel his trip to London.¹⁴⁴ Ironically, given the obsessive attention Anglo-American officials had paid to Nehru's health, and its impact on his decision making, news of Shastri's medical scare caused little anxiety in London or Washington. In part this can be attributed to a reticence on the part of British and US policymakers to confront the uncomfortable reality that Shastri's premiership might turn out to be as medically compromised as that of his predecessor. Equally, as a victim of coronary heart disease himself, Lyndon Johnson was predisposed to downplay its impact on his own leadership. In conversation with Indira Gandhi, back in April 1964, Johnson had emphasised that, 'people had counted him out at the time of his own heart attack. But two months later he was back in shape again and had been ever since'.¹⁴⁵

To the British government's discomfort, however, when Shastri did make it to England in December 1964, he proved to be a good deal less impressionable than had been anticipated. During four days of talks with British ministers, Gore-Booth noted that, Shastri took unexpectedly strident positions on colonialism, espousing 'independence for everyone'; economic aid, stating 'our problems are bigger than yours'; and Kashmir, where 'he took a rather surprisingly orthodox and rigid stand'.¹⁴⁶ British officials would have been less surprised had they taken the trouble to look back more closely into Shastri's past. In 1956, the future Indian leader had chastised those who confused his unassuming demeanour with a lack of inner steel. 'Perhaps due to my being small in size and soft in tongue people are apt to believe

that I am not able to be very firm with them,' Shastri had observed. 'Though not physically strong I think I am internally not that weak.'¹⁴⁷ Washington found Shastri just intractable. The Indian premier's unexpectedly tough posture on Kashmir irked US officials, as did his decision to accept military aid from the Soviets. Moreover, given Lyndon Johnson's increasing obsession with the war his administration was fighting in Vietnam, Shastri's criticism of America's Southeast Asian policy aggravated a particularly raw presidential nerve.¹⁴⁸

In April 1965, Indo-US relations went from bad to worse. Irritated by Pakistan's ongoing flirtation with Communist China, Lyndon Johnson cancelled plans for Ayub Khan to visit to the United States. To the dismay of Chester Bowles back in New Delhi, in an ill-judged display of regional 'even-handedness', at the same time, Johnson withdrew a standing invitation for Shastri to visit Washington.¹⁴⁹ In the *Times of India*, Johnson's 'unprovoked snub' was disparaged as an 'ill-deserved discourtesy'.¹⁵⁰ In London, the *Economist* observed wryly that by scrubbing both the Ayub and Shastri visits, Johnson had accomplished, 'the unusual diplomatic feat of giving offence to both [India and Pakistan] simultaneously'.¹⁵¹ By May 1965, it had become glaringly apparent to the State Department that Shastri was a foreign-policy pragmatist, willing to work with the East, the West, and preferably both, to further India's interests. 'In long run,' US officials concluded, 'he [Shastri] may intensify the search for alternative sources of support that make India less reliant on the US'.¹⁵² Within a matter of months, ham-fisted attempts by Britain and the United States to maintain a posture of neutrality following renewed Indo-Pakistani clashes over Kashmir had further alienated Shastri's government. In the aftermath of the brief Indo-Pakistan War of 1965, Britain and the United States, as the State Department had feared, were left to watch from the diplomatic sidelines as the Soviet Union took on the role of South Asian peacemaker. When Britain's premier, Harold Wilson, tried to intercede in the affairs of India and Pakistan after 1965, a cabinet colleague later reflected, they 'just ignored him'.¹⁵³

VI.

British and US government documents on the succession to Jawaharlal Nehru offer up new perspectives on the nature of Anglo-American relations with India in the early 1960s. Viewed in the round, they provide fresh insights into the concerns which British and US policymakers harboured for India's survival as a stable, secular, and unitary democracy, and the degree to which the Nehru-Shastri transition was envisaged as an opportunity to transform India's strained relationship with the West. Whilst difficult to gauge its precise impact, British and US intervention in the succession process, and more especially the promotion of Lal Bahadur Shastri's prime-ministerial aspirations, clearly constituted an intrusion into India's internal affairs. However, Anglo-American interference in domestic Indian politics, previously neglected in the historiography of the transfer of power from Nehru to Shastri, had consequences that extended beyond the early 1960s. The mutual disaffection that came to characterise the interaction between India and the West during Shastri's brief premiership, continued to colour Anglo-American perceptions of Indian foreign policymaking for much of the remainder of the cold war.

In retrospect, it is apparent that the British and US governments misjudged the effect that the transfer of power from Jawaharlal Nehru to Lal Bahadur Shastri would have on India's international relations. Surprisingly, senior Anglo-American

officials had no first-hand knowledge of the man they championed as Nehru's successor. Shastri's reputation as a moderate and pro-Western figure was conflated in London and Washington with a willingness on his part to adopt a more accommodating approach than his predecessor on such thorny issues as Kashmir, regional security, and colonialism. Prior to 1964, British and US policymakers exaggerated Jawaharlal Nehru's significance as an impediment to an Indo-Pakistan rapprochement and the establishment closer ties between India and the West. After Nehru's death, they proved equally culpable of misinterpreting Shastri's willingness to break new diplomatic ground. The characters and leadership styles of India's first and second Prime Minister's differed markedly. The substance of their politics, as Anglo-American policymakers belatedly came to realise, did not.

Early on 11 January 1966, Lal Bahadur Shastri suffered a fatal heart attack. Just hours before, he had brokered an Indo-Pakistan accord with Ayub Khan in the Soviet city of Tashkent. The antipathy and discord that bedevilled domestic Indian politics, and the nation's relationship with the West under Shastri's successor, Indira Gandhi, led policymakers in London and Washington to look back upon his brief tenure as India's Prime Minister with rosy nostalgia.¹⁵⁴ 'I am sure,' Paul Gore-Booth reflected in the early 1970s, 'that India, Britain and the world could have done with a little more time with Lal Bahadur Shastri.'¹⁵⁵ In fact, it was Jawaharlal Nehru's passing, not Shastri's, that acted as the catalyst for the erosion of Anglo-American influence in South Asia. The death of India's 'last viceroy', in May 1964, empowered a new generation of Indian national leaders unencumbered by the psychological baggage that had shaped Nehru's relationship with the West. As Shastri's presence in the Soviet Union in January 1966 underscored, in the post-Nehruvian world India's foreign policymaking would be based not on past associations, but on existing political realities.

Abbreviations

CAB	Cabinet Office Records, United Kingdom National Archives, Kew
CO	Colonial Office Records, United Kingdom National Archives, Kew
CREST	CIA Records Search Tool, College Park, Maryland
DO	Dominions and Commonwealth Relations Office Records, United Kingdom National Archives, Kew
DSP	Duncan Sandys Papers, Churchill College Archives, Cambridge
FAOHP	Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Library of Congress, Washington, DC
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office Records, United Kingdom National Archives, Kew
FO	Foreign Office Records, United Kingdom National Archives, Kew
GBP	Gore-Booth Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford
JFKL	John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts
KV	Security Service Records, United Kingdom National Archives, Kew
LBJL	Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas
NARA	United States National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland
PREM	Premiers Records, United Kingdom National Archives, Kew
T	Treasury Records, Kew, United Kingdom National Archives, Kew

Notes

1. K. Frank, *Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi* (London, 2002), 274.
2. *New York Times*, 28 May 1964.

3. Malcolm MacDonald to Viscount Kilmuir, 6 Oct. 1958, DO 35/8649. For further insights into Nehru's 'virtually unquestioned authority' in India, see S. Ganguly, 'The Prime Minister and Foreign and Defence Policies' in James Manor (ed), *Nehru to the Nineties: The Changing Office of the Prime Minister in India* (London, 1994).
4. 'After Nehru', *The Times*, 24 Jan. 1964.
5. M. Brecher, *Succession in India: A Study in Decision-Making* (London, 1966), 6.
6. *Time*, 24 Aug. 1962; W. Hangen, *After Nehru, Who?* (London, 1963).
7. Notably, S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol.3, 1956–1964* (London, 1984), a semi-official biographical work, and the most comprehensive, if somewhat hagiographic account of Nehru's life produced to date; J.M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (London, 2003), like Gopal, Brown's study benefited from access to Nehru's post-1947 papers, which remain closed to general researchers; S. Wolpert, *Nehru: A Tryst with Destiny* (Oxford, 1996); and more recently, and perhaps most controversially, B. Zachariah, *Nehru* (London, 2004).
8. Brecher's *Succession in India*, in particular, draws upon interviews with many of the main Indian protagonists, and provides an exhaustive analysis of the succession process and its aftermath. For occasionally illuminating biographical sketches of the central characters involved in the succession drama, see, Hangen, *After Nehru*.
9. See, R.J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India and Pakistan* (New York, 1994), and A. Inder Singh, *The Limits of influence: South Asia and the Anglo-American Relationship, 1947–56* (London, 1993). Significantly, McMahon underplays the importance of Britain's role on the Indian subcontinent in the early 1960s, and obscures the centrality of the Anglo-American relationship in Washington's South Asian policymaking. Equally, Inder Singh's authoritative account, whilst presenting compelling evidence of US governments' enthusiasm for working closely with the British in South Asia after 1947, restricts its analysis to the first decade of the continent's post-independence history.
10. In the early 1960s, British companies had £300 million of capital invested in India, generating £35 million of annual remittances to the London Exchequer. In addition, the Indian sub-continent provided a lucrative export market for British manufactured goods, generating annual orders of £150 million. Rumbold to Sandys, 27 June 1962, DO 196/1; Pliatzky to Milner-Barry, 27 June 1962, T 317/363.
11. By 1960, the provision of Soviet economic aid to India's government, although dwarfed by that of the United States, had come to represent an important element in India's economic planning. In addition, Nehru valued Soviet support in the United Nations Security Council for India's position on Kashmir, and Moscow's willingness to provide India with military hardware at heavily discounted prices. Moreover, in the political sphere, as Sino-Indian border tensions rose, India placed increasing emphasis on maintaining cordial relations with the Soviets. Nehru's government, the British calculated, 'realise that if Russia threw her weight behind China on this issue, the future prospect for India would be very black indeed; they appreciate that if Russia on the other hand were to use her influence in Peking to restrain Chinese policy toward India, silver linings would appear on otherwise dark clouds.' See, 'India: Effects of American and Soviet Economic Assistance', MacDonald to Sandys, 21 Oct. 1960, DO 196/125; 'India: Shifts in Indian Foreign Policy', MacDonald to Home, 13 July 1960, DO 196/125.
12. When the Kennedy government placed its first foreign assistance bill before the US Congress in early 1961, India was earmarked US\$500,000,000 of US economic aid. The remainder of the globe received less than half this figure. D. Merrill, *Bread and the Ballot: The United States and India's Economic Development, 1947–1963* (Chapel Hill, 1990), 175.
13. Notable works addressing Anglo-American relations with India in the 1960s include: D. Kux, *India and the United States: Estranged Democracies* (Washington, 1993); D. Merrill, *Bread and the Ballot: The United States and India's Economic Development* (Chapel Hill, 1990); A. Rotter, *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947–1964* (Ithaca, 2000); and, R.P. Daur, *A North-South Mind in an East-West World: Chester Bowles and the Making of United States Cold War Foreign Policy, 1951–1969* (Westport, CT, 2005). Additional insights into official Anglo-American thinking on India toward the end of the Nehru era can be gleaned from the memoirs of senior officials. Works of particular note

- include: C. Bowles, *Promises to Keep: My Years in Public Life, 1941-1969* (New York, 1971); J.K. Galbraith, *Ambassador's Journal: A Personal Account of the Kennedy Years* (Boston, 1969), P. Gore-Booth, *With Great Truth and Respect* (London, 1974), and H. Macmillan, *At the End of the Day 1961-1963* (London, 1973).
14. Bowles to Rusk, 1 Jun3 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, N[atational] S[ecurity] F[ile], Country File, India, Box 128, Folder 4.
 15. 'Prime Minister's Commonwealth Tour', 4 June 1958, CAB 129/93, C. (58), 120. See, also, D.D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Waging Peace, 1956-1961* (New York, 1965), 113.
 16. J.K. Galbraith, *Name-Dropping: From F.D.R On* (New York, 1999), 132. For additional insights into Nehru 'Britishness' see, B.R. Nanda, 'Nehru and the British', *Modern Asian Studies*, xxx (1996), 469-79; and J.K. Galbraith, *A Life in Our Times* (London, 1981), 408.
 17. M. MacDonald, *Titans and Others* (London, 1972), 232.
 18. 'Nehru - 1961', undated, c. Oct. 1961, JFKL, Kenney Papers, NSF, Box 106.
 19. Subsequent revelations surrounding Kennedy's health, and in particular his chronic dependency on strong doses of steroids to counter the effects of Addison's disease, tarnished the activist image projected by custodians of New Frontier mythology. That said, evidence that Kennedy's health adversely impacted upon his decision making whilst President remains inconclusive, and has been vigorously contested by members of his administration. For more insights into Kennedy's health and its effect on his presidency, see, R. Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963* (Boston, 2003); D. Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings that Shaped the Twentieth Century* (London, 2007); and D. Owen, *In Sickness and in Power: Illness in Heads of Government during the Last 100 Years* (London, 2008).
 20. Kennedy lamented that his encounter with Nehru was, 'a disaster . . . the worst head-of-state visit I have had.' A. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, 1965), 523-6. India's Ambassador to the United States, B.K. Nehru, was similarly taken aback by Nehru's lacklustre display in Washington. 'Too much depended on Nehru's personal input, energy, and prestige,' he subsequently reflected. 'The upshot was that when the US foreign policy machinery was crackling with the activism and can-do spirit of Kennedy's New Frontier, India's foreign policy was beginning to creak. Nehru sadly stayed on beyond his time.' Cited in Kux, *Estranged Democracies*, 195-6.
 21. Conversation between Home and Rusk, 10 Dec. 1961, FO 371/159708, D1024/61.
 22. C.L. Sulzberger, *Last of the Giants* (London, 1972), 906. The British Premier, Harold Macmillan, felt much the same. Having met with Nehru in early November 1961, Macmillan confided to his diary that the Indian leader was, 'much aged and very tired'. Entry for 4 Nov. 1961 [Oxford, Bodleian Library], Harold Macmillan Papers, Macmillan Diaries, d.44, 24 Oct. 1961- 24 Jan. 1962.
 23. *The Times*, 12 Feb. 1957.
 24. 'Mr. Nehru's Press Conference, Colombo', 15 Nov. 1962, DO 133/51.
 25. See, H. L'Etang, *Ailing Leaders in Power, 1914-1994* (London, 1995), and B.E. Park, *The Impact of Illness on World Leaders* (Philadelphia, 1986). L'Etang's groundbreaking work examines the effects of mental and physical incapacity in political, military and business leaders across the globe. In noting that statistically incapacity increases progressively after the age of 55, L'Etang argues that democracies could, and should, implement procedures to identify and remove medically unfit leaders from office. Similarly, Bert Park, drawing in his training as a neurosurgeon, has produced a series of enlightening studies of the impact of severe illness on world leaders, from Hitler to Franklin Roosevelt. In addition, an illuminating account of mental illness in Presidents of the United States between 1776 and 1974 can be found in Jonathan R.T. Davidson, K.M. Connor, and M. Swartz, 'Mental Illness in US Presidents between 1776 and 1974: A Review of Biographical Sources', *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, xciv, 1 (Jan. 2006), 47-51.
 26. D. Owen, *In Sickness*, and, 'Diseased, Demented, Depressed: Serious Illness in Heads of State', *Quarterly Journal of Medicine*, xcvi, 5 (2003), 325-36.
 27. See, in particular, D. Owen, 'The Effect of Prime Minister Anthony Eden's Illness on his Decision Making during the Suez Crisis', *Quarterly Journal of Medicine*, xcvi, 6 (2005),

- 387–402; D. Dutton, *Anthony Eden. A Life and Reputation* (London, 1997); D.R. Thorpe, *Eden: The Life and Times of Anthony Eden, First Earl of Avon, 1897–1977* (London, 2003); and K. Kyle, *Suez* (London, 1991).
28. Gore-Booth to Sandys, 7 June 1962, DO 196/75.
29. The 'Panch Sheel' or 'Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence' were incorporated into the 1954 Sino-Indian Treaty on Trade and Intercourse with Tibet. These encompassed commitments to mutual non-aggression and respect for national sovereignty. The slogan and policy of *Hindee Chinee bhai-bhai*, or Indian-Chinese brotherhood, was popularised in India following the Treaty, the text of which is reproduced in, A. Appadorai (ed), *Select Documents on India's Foreign Policy and Relations, 1947–1972* (New Delhi, 1982), i. 459–66.
30. Pandit to Mountbatten, 14 Feb. 1962, and, Mountbatten to Pandit, 20 June 1962 [Southampton, Hartley Library], Mountbatten Papers, MB1/J325.
31. V. Lakshmi Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness: A Personal Memoir* (London, 1979), 315.
32. Galbraith to Kennedy, 6 Dec. 1962, cited in J.K. Galbraith, *Ambassador's Journal*, 513.
33. Opening meeting on Sino-Indian conflict', 12 Nov. 1962, FO 371/164929/FC 1063/10. From the late 1950s, with the PRC outpacing India in steel production, industrial capacity, literacy rates, and domestic consumption, Kennedy feared that a failure to contain a Communist Chinese government 'determined on war as a means of bringing about its ultimate success', would leave future generations of Americans to confront, 'a more dangerous situation than any we faced since the end of the second war . . .' News Conference 59, Washington, 1 Aug. 1963, *Public Papers of the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, 1963*, American Presidency Project. Available from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/>.
34. Macmillan to Kennedy, 13 Dec. 1962, *F[oreign] R[elations] of the U[nited] S[tates], 1961-1963, vol. XIX, South Asia* (Washington DC: GPO, 1996), xix. 432.
35. Gopal, *Nehru, 1956–1964*, 223.
36. India After Nehru', 9 June 1964, PREM 11/4864.
37. On 23 October, as Chinese forces surged into northern India, Nehru stated publicly that: 'We are not going to give up our basic principles [of non-alignment] because of the present difficulty. Even this difficulty will be more effectively met by continuing that policy.' Delhi to CRO, No. 1645, 23 Oct. 1962, DO 196/165.
38. COS (62) 73, 20 Nov. 1962, DO 196/168; 'Chinese Intentions against India', JIC Report, 22 Nov. 1962, CAB 158/47.
39. Ormsby Gore to FO, No. 2901, Nehru to Kennedy, 20 Nov. 1962, FO 371/164880/F1195/44/G (A).
40. Ormsby Gore to Macmillan, No. 2899, 20 Nov. 1962, DO 196/168.
41. 'After Nehru, Who?' J.A.G Banks, 26 Nov. 1962, DO 131/151.
42. Notably, both Kennedy and Galbraith left senior Indian officials in no doubt that Menon's reputation on Capitol Hill as a bureaucratically incompetent and fiercely anti-American political opportunist acted as a brake on US military aid to India. Galbraith to Kennedy, No. 1647, 21 Oct. 1962, JFKL, Kennedy Papers, NSF, Box 107A; Galbraith, *Ambassador's*, New Delhi, 23 Oct. 1962, 431; President Kennedy meeting with B.K. Nehru, 26 Oct. 1962, JFKL, Kennedy Papers, Meetings Recordings, Tape No. 40.
43. New Delhi to Sandys, 14 Nov. 1962, DO 196/172; Clutterbuck to Garner, 21 Oct. 1954, KV 2/2514-3.
44. Ormsby Gore to FO, No. 2717, 29 Oct. 1962, DO 196/166.
45. CRO South Asia Department Meeting, 2 Jan. 1964, DO 196/186.
46. Rusk to McConaughy, 16 Oct. 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, vol. XIX, South Asia*, 345.
47. James to CRO, No. 1502, 7 Nov. 1962, DO 189/245.
48. SOSCRO No. 58, 26 Nov. 1962, DSP, DSDN 8/1.
49. Gore-Booth to Sandys, 14 Aug. 1961, FO 371/164873/F1041/8.
50. Sandys meeting with Lal Bahadur Shastri, 25 Nov. 1962, and China Committee minutes, 26 Nov. 1962, DO 196/170.
51. SOSCRO No. 58, 26 Nov. 1962, DSP, DSDN 8/1; China Committee minutes, 26 Nov. 1962, DO 196/170.

52. Sandys, SOSCRO No. 62 Secret, 27 Nov. 1962, FO 371/164930, FC1063/24 (G).
53. 'India After Nehru', 9 June 1964, PREM 11/4864.
54. Ormerod to Allen, 22 Dec. 1962, DO 133/51.
55. P. Zeigler, *Mountbatten: The Official Biography* (London, 1985), 602.
56. 'Indian Politics and the Succession Problem', 13 Jan. 1964, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP78-03061A000200050001-5.
57. Zachariah, *Nehru*, 252-3.
58. Diary entry for 18 July 1963 [New Haven, Connecticut] Yale University Library, Chester Bowles Papers, Part IX, Series III, Diary 1, Box 392, Folder 158.
59. Wolpert, *Nehru*, 490.
60. 'An Ailing Nehru and the Indian Leadership', 24 Jan. 1964, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP79-00927A004300090002-6.
61. Belcher to Pickard, 26 Aug. 1963, DO 196/2.
62. Malcolm MacDonald to Viscount Kilmuir, 6 Oct. 1958, DO 35/8649.
63. Benjamin Read to McGeorge Bundy, 16 Jan. 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Box 128, Folder 1; Bowles to Rusk, 17 Jan. 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Box 128, Folder 1.
64. India after Nehru', 9 June 1964, PREM 11/4864.
65. 'An Ailing Nehru and the Indian Leadership', 24 Jan. 1964, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP79-00927A004300090002-6.
66. 'India After Nehru', 9 June 1964, PREM 11/4864.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Bowles to Rusk, No. 3595, 1 June 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Box 128, Folder 4 India Cables Vol. II 4-64 to 6-64.
69. Komer to McGeorge Bundy, 6 March 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Box 128, Folder 3.
70. 'Indian Cabinet', Gore-Booth to Saville Garner, 18 Jan. 1964, DO 133/151.
71. Gore-Booth to Saville-Garner, 3 Jan. 1964, DO 196/311. *The New York Times* picked up on British concerns, observing on 31 May 1964 that: 'The question being asked here [in London] is: Can the fledgling democracy of India and her unity be held together? The British are looking in anxiously; they recall the collapse of Indian unity after the death of great emperors in the past. 'Struggle for Power Held Key to India's Future', *The New York Times*, 31 May 1964.
72. 'India After Nehru', 9 June 1964, PREM 11/4864.
73. *The Times* subsequently noted, that for all Lal Bahadur Shastri's inexperience in comparison with Nehru, 'he could at least he could at least claim to be an Indian of the Indians.' 'Indian Prime Minister to Visit Britain', *The Times*, 1 Oct. 1964.
74. T. Eliot Weil to J. Jefferson Jones III, 29 Jan. 1955, NARA, R[ecord] G[rroup] 59, Office of South Asian Affairs, Office Files of Director J. Jefferson Jones Lot 59 D 75 folder India 1955.
75. Gore-Booth to Belcher, 8 May 1963, GBP, MSS.Gorebooth 86.
76. 'India After Nehru', 9 June 1964, PREM 11/4864.
77. *Ibid.*
78. 'The Future of Anglo-American Relations', 5 Jan. 1960, PREM 11/2986.
79. In September 1961, Gore-Booth noted that, '...Britain has in India, and should continue to have for some time, rather more influence than our physical horse power would seem to justify.' Moreover, to the surprise and delight of Whitehall, the largely illusory image of British power appeared to retain potency within Kennedy's government. 'The Americans', CRO officials noted, '... seem to have a respect for the amount of influence which they imagine we carry with the Indians.' See, 'U.K. Influence in India', Gore-Booth, 7 Sept. 1961, DO 133/145.
80. *The Times*, 8 Jan. 1964; 'Prime Minister's Health', 13 Jan. 1964, PREM11/4865.
81. 'Dr. Woodward on Nehru's health', 10 Jan. 1964, NARA, RG 59, Records Relating to Indian Political Affairs, 1964-1966, Box 5.
82. 'Scenario of Possible Actions Related to Prime Minister Nehru's Illness', 13 Jan. 1964, NARA, RG 59, Records Relating to Indian Political Affairs, 1964-1966, Box 5.
83. 'Mr. Nehru's Health', 5 Feb. 1964, DO 196/311.
84. Hangen, *After Nehru*, 128.

85. 'Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri', June 1964, PREM 11/4864; 'Lal Bahadur Shastri', 15 Jan. 1964, NARA, RG 59, Records Relating to Indian Political Affairs, 1964–1966, Box 5;
86. 'Central Intelligence Bulletin', 13 March 1964, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP79T0975 A007500380001-7; 'An Ailing Nehru and the Indian Leadership,' 24 Jan. 1964, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP79-00927A004300090002-6.
87. 'An Ailing Nehru and the Indian Leadership', 24 Jan. 1964, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP79-00927A004300090002-6.
88. Komer to Lyndon Johnson, 27 March 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Box 128, Folder 3, India Memos & Misc Vol. I 12-63 to 3-64.
89. Conversation between Bunker and B.K. Nehru, 6 April 1964, NARA, RG 59, Records of Ambassador at Large Ellsworth Bunker, Lott67D291, Box 16, India 1964.
90. Komer to Johnson, 2 April 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Vol. II, Cables, 4/64-6/64. In March 1964, the results of a comprehensive poll undertaken by the Indian Institute of Public Opinion suggested that Shastri was the popular choice to become India's next premier. Some 26.9% of respondents interviewed endorsed Shastri as Nehru's successor. The second most popular candidate, Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, received the support of a comparatively paltry 5.9% of respondents. 'After Nehru, Who?', *Public Opinion Surveys of the Indian Institute of Public Opinion*, Vol. IX, No. 5, Feb. 1964.
91. Hangen, *After Nehru*, 33.
92. 'Current Intelligence Weekly Summary', 22 May 1958, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP79-00927A001700110001-2.
93. 'Implications of Mr. Nehru's Death', 3 July 1962, DO 133/51. Welles Hangen, an NBC journalist working out of New Delhi, felt likewise. In his influential book, *After Nehru, Who?*, which appeared in Indian bookstores that autumn, Hangen named Desai as the clear favourite to replace Nehru Hangen, *After Nehru*, 29–32.
94. 'Morarji Desai', 15 Jan. 1964, NARA, RG 59, Records Relating to Indian Political Affairs, 1964–1966, Box 5.
95. 'India After Nehru', 9 June 1964, PREM 11/4864.
96. Notably, in 1959, Gandhi played an important role in the persuading her father to take the controversial decision to dismiss the democratically elected communist government in the southern state of Kerala. R. Jeffrey, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the Smoking Gun: Who Pulled the Trigger on Kerala's Communist Government in 1959?,' *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, xxix (1991), 72–85.
97. O'Brien to CRO, 16 Jan. 1964, DO 133/151.
98. To Gandhi's annoyance, she had been widely compared with Edith Bolling Wilson. Dubbed the 'first woman to run the American government', Mrs Wilson had been credited with acting as a *de facto* head of state for seventeen months after her husband and twenty-eighth President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, had suffered a debilitating stroke in October 1919. Bowles to Rusk, 28 Jan. 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Box 128, Folder 1.
99. Bowles to Rusk, 14 Jan. 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Box 128, Folder 1.
100. Bowles to Rusk, 20 Mar. 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Box 128, Folder 1.
101. C.P. Srivastava, *Lal Bahadur Shastri: A Life of Truth in Politics* (New Delhi, 1995), 85; *The Times of India*, 28 April 1964.
102. Bowles to Rusk, 11 March 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Box 128, Folder 2.
103. Conversation between Bunker and B.K. Nehru, 6 April 1964, NARA, RG59, Records of Ambassador at Large Ellsworth Bunker, Lott67D291, Box 16, India 1964.
104. Ambler to Acting High Commissioner, New Delhi, 17 April 1964, DO 133/151.
105. 'An Ailing Nehru and the Indian Leadership', 24 Jan. 1964, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP79-00927A004300090002-6.
106. Gore-Booth minute to Deputy High Commissioner, 30 Jan. 1964, DO 133/151.
107. 'Prime Minister's Visit to New Delhi', 27–29 May 1964, PREM 11/4864.
108. 'Mountbatten meeting with Radhakrishnan', 28 May 1964, DO 196/311.
109. *Ibid.*

110. Rusk to Ball and Johnson, 29 May 1964, NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1964-66, POL 15-1 INDIA.
111. O'Brien to Emery, 2 June 1964, DO 196/311.
112. 'Indian Internal Matters', Gore-Booth to Saville-Garner, 3 Jan. 1964, DO 196/311.
113. C. Andrew and V. Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive II: The KGB and the Wider World* (London, 2005), 314-16.
114. Nehru's speech to conference of the heads of Indian Missions in Europe, Salzburg, Austria, 28-30 Jun. 1955, in H.Y. Sharad Prasad and A.K. Damodaran (eds), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 29, 1 Jun. -to 31 Aug. 1955, (New Delhi, 2001), 257. India's Intelligence Bureau provided Nehru with regular reports on US efforts to, 'carry on their propaganda through newspapers, missionaries and others in India'. Such activity, it was alleged, involved subsidising the production of pro-Western Indian newspapers, such as *Thought*, and the provision of financial payments to Indian journalists in return for 'propaganda work'. See, for example, Nehru's note to Secretary General and Foreign Secretary, 5 Sep. 1956, in Mushirul Hasan, H.Y. Sharad Prasad, and A.K. Damodaran (eds) *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 35, 1 Sept. 1956 to 30 Nov. 1956, (New Delhi, 2005), 527-8.
115. Ambassador Mary Seymour Olmsted, 8 April 1992, FAOHP. Available from: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/diplomacy/>. Ambassador Olmsted worked in the economic section of the US Embassy in New Delhi between 1960 and 1964.
116. See, in particular, K. Conboy and J. Morrison. *The CIA's Secret War in Tibet* (Lawrence, 2002.); M.S. Kohli and K. Conboy, *Spies in the Himalayas: Secret Missions and Perilous Climbs* (Lawrence, 2003).
117. Notably, Ellsworth Bunker, US Ambassador to India between 1956 and 1961, confirmed that the CIA had funnelled money to the Congress Party through S.K. Patil, a Congress leader from Maharashtra, to sustain its campaign of opposition to the communist administration in Kerala in the late 1950s. See, E. Bunker, Oral History, 18 Jun. & 17 Jul. 1979 [New York, Butler Library, Columbia University], 67-8. Bunker's testimony has been corroborated by more junior US officials, such as David S. Burgess, Labour attaché at the US Embassy in New Delhi between 1955 and 1960. See, David. S. Burgess, Oral History, 7 April 1991, FAOHP. Available from: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/diplomacy/>. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, US Ambassador to India in the early 1970s, had earlier indicated that the CIA had been used to fund Congress Party campaigns against the Communist Party of India in Kerala and West Bengal. See his *A Dangerous Place* (Boston, 1978), 41.
118. Gopal, *Nehru: 1956-1964*, 122. Gopal based his assertion on records of discussions that had taken place between his father, and India's President, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and V. Sahay, India's Cabinet Secretary, in 1966. Nehru had asked the Cabinet Secretary to investigate allegations linking Mathai to the CIA back in 1959. In contrast, a subsequent biographer of Nehru's, who was afforded privileged access to his private papers, was unable to unearth any evidence linking Mathai to the CIA. See Brown, *Nehru*, 382-3.
119. Ambassador Mary Seymour Olmsted, Oral History, 8 April 1992, FAOHP. Available from: <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query>.
120. See, for example, 'Additional changes in Nehru's cabinet are possible,' Central Intelligence Bulletin, 4 Dec. 1954, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP79T000975A001800310 001-7, and 'Growing pressure on Nehru to Retire as Prime Minister', Current Intelligence Bulletin, 13 Aug. 1957, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP79T00975A003200370001-5.
121. This involved, amongst other things, joint CIA-Intelligence Bureau operations to form of a Clandestine Warfare Unit to monitor Chinese supply routes into Tibet, and the placement of monitoring equipment on two Himalayan peaks in 1965 and 1967, with a view to collecting data on Chinese nuclear tests. See Robert Komer to McGeorge Bundy, 14 Oct. 1965, LBJL, NSF, Robert W. Komer Papers, Box 13, Folder 6 Bundy, McG - Decisions 1965-66; and, Walt Rostow to President Johnson, 30 April 1966, LBJL, NSF, Intelligence File, Box 2, Folder India's Unconventional Warfare Force.
122. CIA Bi-Weekly Propaganda Guidance, 'Indian Politics and the Succession Problem', 13 Jan. 1964, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP78-03061A000200050001-5.

123. J.K. Galbraith, *A Life in Our Times: Memoirs* (London, 1981), 395. The CIA station chief in New Delhi, Harry Rositzke, later acknowledged that whilst the Agency's activities in India were scaled back at Galbraith's insistence, active operations continued to be undertaken. See, H. Rositzke, *The CIA's Secret Operations: Espionage, Counterespionage and Covert Action* (Boulder, 1988); R. Parker, *John Kenneth Galbraith: His Life, His Politics, His Economics* (New York, 2005).
124. Eugene Rosenfeld, Oral History, 28 Nov. 1989, FAOHP. Available from: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/diplomacy/>. In addition, the CIA found that Indian journalists provided a useful window on official Indian thinking. See, for example, the detailed account provided by the CIA of a meeting between Nehru and the Indian journalist, Frank Moraes, covering Indian foreign policy. 'Nehru's views on Current World Problems', CIA Current Intelligence Bulletin, 13 Dec. 1956, NARA, CREST, CIA-RDP79T00975A00280046000-10.
125. See, for example, Bowles to Salisbury, 7 March 1953, 9 March 1966, 23 Nov. 1966, and 22 March 1968, [New York, Butler Library, Columbia University] Harrison Salisbury Papers, Box 1 Folder Chester Bowles. Also, Bowles to Robert Komer, 10 Nov. 1965, LBJL, NSF, Robert W. Komer Papers, Box 13, Folder 2 Bowles 11-3-63-1965 [2 of 4].
126. Morrice James to C. M. Walker (CRO), 9 June 1961, DO 133/146.
127. Gore-Booth to Belcher, 17 Jan. 1964, DO 196/311.
128. The IRD's role in the cold war has received considerable scholarly attention. The majority of studies to date, however, have concentrated on IRD activity during the 1950s. Moreover, little focus has been placed on the organisations work on the Indian subcontinent. See for example, A. Defty, *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda, 1945–53: The Information Research Department* (Abingdon, 2004); J.R. Vaughan, *The Failure of American and British Propaganda in the Middle East, 1945–1957: Unconquerable Minds* (London, 2005), and "'Cloak Without Dagger": How the Information Research Department Fought Britain's Cold War in the Middle East, 1948-1956', *Cold War History*, iv, 3 (2004), 56–84; H. Wilford, 'The Information Research Department: Britain's Secret Cold War Weapon Revealed', *Review of International Studies*, xxiv (1998), 353–69; C. Mayhew, *A War of Words: A Cold War Witness* (London, 1998); P. Lashmar and J. Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War 1948-1977* (Stroud, 1998); and T. Shaw, 'The Information Research Department of the British Foreign office and the Korean War, 1950–53', *Journal of Contemporary History*, xxxiv, 2 (1999) 263–81.
129. By 1953, Mullik was receiving regular deliveries of several IRD publications. See, V.C. Martin (New Delhi) to G.S. Bozman (CRO), 7 Oct. 1953, FO 1110/603.
130. In early 1947, prior to the transfer of power in India, Guy Liddell, Deputy Director General of Britain's Security Service, struck an agreement with India's Home Minister, Vallabhbhai Patel, to place an MI5 Security Liaison Officer (SLO) inside the British High Commission in New Delhi. In turn, India's Intelligence Bureau posted a liaison officer to the Indian High Commission in London. The SLO's role was to provide advice and support to local Indian security agencies, whilst at the same time acting as conduit for the exchange of security-related information between London and New Delhi. It was not to engage in acts of subterfuge or espionage. Budgetary pressures within Whitehall forced a reluctant Security Service to end its presence in India in the late 1960s, to the dismay of Britain's High Commissioner, John Freeman, and the head of India's Intelligence Bureau, S.P. Varma. Visit of Captain Liddell (Security Service) to the Middle East', Confidential Annex to J.I.C. (47) 33rd Meeting (0), 9 June 1947, CAB 159/1; Roger Hollis to Sir Burke Trend, 13 Nov. 1965, CO 1035/171.
131. 'India', Visit of Nigel Clive (IRD) to India and Pakistan, 5 Dec. 1967, FCO 95/290.
132. One former Director General of MI5, Stella Rimington, worked for IRD in India for a brief period in the mid-1960s, distributing covert propaganda to Indian journalists, politicians, and academics who, 'had been recruited to use the material unattributably'. Rimington confirmed the IRD's success in placing material, some of which 'was quite personal stuff about [Indian] politicians', in Indian newspapers and magazines. S. Rimington, *Open Secret: The Autobiography of the Former Director-General of MI5* (London, 2002), 75.

133. Peter Joy (New Delhi) to C.F.R. Barclay (IRD London), 8 May 1964, FO 1110/182; 'India', Visit of Nigel Clive (IRD) to India and Pakistan, 5 Dec. 1967, FCO 95/290.
134. 'Nehru's Successor', Delhi to CRO, 2 Jun. 1964, PREM 11/4864. Shastri was officially sworn in as India's Prime Minister on 9 June 1964.
135. 'A new Prime Minister for India', *The Guardian*, 3 June 1964.
136. Ambassador Brandon H. Grove, 14 Nov. 1994, FAOHP. Available from: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/diplomacy/>.
137. Bowles to Rusk, No. 3595, 1 June 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF Country File, India, Box 128, Folder 4; Howard B. Schaffer, *Chester Bowles: New Dealer in the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 288–90.
138. 'India After Nehru', 9 June 1964, PREM 11/4864.
139. Hughes to Acting Secretary, 27 May 1964, NARA, RG 59, Records Relating to Indian Political Affairs, 1964–1966, Box 5.
140. 'India After Nehru', 9 June 1964, PREM 11/4864.
141. Ellsworth Bunker conversation with Birla, 7 Aug. 1964, NARA, RG 59, Records of Ambassador at Large Ellsworth Bunker, Lot 67D291, Box 16, Folder India 1964.
142. 'India After Nehru', 9 June 1964, PREM 11/4864.
143. 'Visit of the Prime Minister of India,' 24 Nov. 1964, DO 196/438.
144. The CIA noted that Shastri's latest coronary was less serious than his previous attacks, but that he had high blood pressure, was running a fever and had been told by his doctors to take several weeks rest. 'Details on Prime Minister Shastri's Heart Attack', CIA Intelligence Cable, 30 June 1964, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Box 128.
145. 'Meeting of President and Mrs. Indira Gandhi', 30 April 1964, NARA RG 59, Records Relating to Indian Political Affairs, 1964–1966, Lot 66 D 149, Presidential Memoranda of Conversation.
146. 'Retrospective Note on Mr. Shastri's Visit by the British High Commissioner in India', 3–6 Dec. 1964, DO 196/438.
147. 'A Life Sketch of Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri', 5 June 1964, *Indiagram*, No. 83.
148. McGeorge Bundy to Johnson, 16 March 1965, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Country File, India, Box 129 [1 of 2] Folder 3 Memos & Misc Vol IV 12-64 to 6-65.
149. Bowles, *Promises to Keep*, 581.
150. Carl Rowan President Johnson, 19 April 1965, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Robert W. Komer Files, Box 22 (1 of 2), Folder 6.
151. *The Economist*, 24 April 1965.
152. Thomas Hughes to Rusk, 16 May 1965, LBJL, Johnson Papers, NSF, Robert W. Komer Files, Box 22 (1 of 2), Folder 6. Shastri felt especially aggrieved at Johnson's decision in light of the repeated assurances given to him by Bowles that Washington strongly backed his government. In the course of their first meeting after Shastri had become Prime Minister, Bowles went out of his way to emphasise that, 'as India's new Prime Minister he [Shastri] could count on President Johnson, Dean Rusk, me and everyone else in our govt for understanding and support in good times or in bad.' Bowles to State Department, 6 June 1964, NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1964-66, POL 1 INDIA-US.
153. D. Healey, *Time of My Life* (London, 1989), 280.
154. The authoritarianism, corruption and nepotism that came to be associated with Indira Gandhi's premierships (1966–77 and 1980–84) undoubtedly influenced the laudatory tenor of subsequent Indian accounts of Shastri's period in office. See for example, Srivastava, *Lal Bahadur Shastri*; S. Ram Sharma, *Lal Bahadur Shastri: An Era of Transition in Indian Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 2001). The nature and timing of Shastri's death spawned a number of contemporary hagiographic works, notably K. Lal's, *The Hero of Tashkent* (New Delhi, 1966) and *Homage to Shastri* (New Delhi, 1966).
155. Gore-Booth, *Truth and Respect*, 317.